

Message Text

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UNCLAS BELFAST 226

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: CONVENTION PASSES FIRST MOTION UNANIMOUSLY

REF: BELFAST 216

1. NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION FINISHED DEBATE ON FIRST SUBSTANTIVE MOTION (REFTEL) AND PASSED IT UNANIMOUSLY JUNE 24. ORIGINAL WITHHOLDERS OF SIGNATURES DAVID BLEAKLEY OF NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY AND HUGH SMYTH, INDEPENDENT UNIONIST EVENTUALLY SIGNED SPONSORING ORDER. KENNEDY LINDSAY OF VANGUARD UNIONISTS PREVENTED UNANIMITY OF PROPOSAL AND ADOPTION BY WITHDRAWING HIS SIGNATURE FOR OBSCURE REASONS.

2. FEATURES LAST DAY DEBATE INCLUDED CONTINUATION ON EARLIER THEMES OF (A) DISTRUST OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT, (B) UNACCEPTABILITY CONTINUED DIRECT RULE, (C) EMERGENCE ULSTER IDENTITY, (D) REJECTION OF INTEGRATION, UNITED IRELAND OR INDEPENDENCE AS ALTERNATIVES FOR LOCALLY-CONSTRUCTED, WIDELY ACCEPTABLE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND NECESSITY REACH UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN COMMUNITIES IN ORDER ACHIEVE THIS. NEW ELEMENTS DEBATE INCLUDED CONDEMNATION BY HARDLINER
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WILLIAM CRAIG OF VIOLENCE ATTRIBUTABLE TO PROTESTANT ACTION

FORCE, EXAMPLE GIVEN BY BRIAN FAULKNER OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF INADEQUACY DIRECT RULE AND CALL BY OFFICIAL UNIONIST HARRY WEST FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) TO PERSUADE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO GIVE UP ITS "DOCTRINAIRE" CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO REMOVE STUMBLING BLOCK TO AGREEMENT. INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS ALMOST ALL MODERATE AND CONCILIATORY IN TONE AND INOFFENSIVE IN SUBSTANCE THEIR REMARKS.

3. COMMENT: CONSTRUCTIVE AND MODERATE DEBATE COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED EVEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND ON A MOTION WORDED WITH PRACTICALLY UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT FROM OUTSET. WHAT WAS SURPRISING WAS UNIVERSALITY ACROSS PARTY LINES OF CERTAIN UNFAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND DIRECT RULE. ON ONE SIDE LOYALISTS HAVE ABANDONED ANY YEARNINGS TOWARD INTEGRATION AND ON OTHER SDLP HAS TACITLY DROPPED DIRECT RULE AS OPTION AND EVEN MUTED "ASPIRATION" TO UNITED IRELAND. MOOD IN CONVENTION AS MOTION PASSED WAS DETERMINATION TO MAKE CONVENTION WORK IN FASHIONING PROVINCIAL ULSTER GOVERNMENT WITHIN UNITED KINGDOM FRAMEWORK.

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